

**Interview with Jane Chapman
conducted by Linda Byrne for the
Providence District History Project Providence Perspective
Part 1 of 2 Parts**

Linda Byrne: Today is December 11, 2007 and I am at Supervisor Smyth's office in the Providence District with Jane Chapman and we are going to talk today with Jane for our Providence Perspective History Project. Good Morning Jane.

Jane Chapman: Good Morning Linda.

Linda: Would you tell us something about yourself, where you grew up starting at the beginning?

Jane: I grew up in Washington, D.C., as did my father and his mother who goes back before the civil war. My husband and I married in 1947 after he came out of the service and we brought one of his cousins over to Jefferson Village to look at a house and we like what we saw. We got married in June and bought the house in July, had all the papers cleared (Linda asked what year and Jane replied 1947) and moved in September and made the first payment on our house, which was \$101. The first payment was due in the first of November of 1947 and I have been there ever since. We watched the county grow and don't like some of it, like the rest, but will probably be there until the house falls in on me.

Linda: That is great, you met and married your husband in 1947 and moved to Jefferson Village, which is obviously still there and has grown up. Do you have children?

Jane: I have three children a son Jim, a daughter Cathy and a younger son Bill. Cathy lives in Fauquier County, Jim lives in Prince William and Bill lives at home with me still in City Park Homes or Jefferson Village, which is what I prefer to call it. When we bought the house this was definitely country, the bus service went no further than Fairfax Circle and it was a circle, there was no cut through. That was as far as the public bus went in this county.

The other went as far as Fallfax, which is down near the Pine Springs area and that, was as far as it ran on Lee Highway.

I worked in Washington, D.C. for the telephone company and to catch a bus into town in the morning my next-door neighbor and I would walk from our house, which is about four blocks, to Lee Highway and catch a Greyhound local bus into Washington, because the other buses the public buses only ran every hour.

Linda: How often did the Greyhound run?

Jane: The local ran about every ½ hour and it ran from out toward Centerville down to Lee Highway.

Linda: What was the cost?

Jane: I don't remember, but it was cheap. I transferred out here to the telephone company in Falls Church, which was actually Arlington County and my neighbor's wife worked there at the telephone company too. We would call the Falls Church Cab Company in the morning to go to work because it was too far to walk. If we each called or if the cab stopped in front of my house or pulled up in front of her sidewalk, which was right next door, it cost us 50 cents to go to work. If she walked to my house or I walked to hers it only cost us a quarter to go to work and it was about a mile or a mile and a quarter. It got so we would holler across the living room window to her dining room window to see who was going to make the call this morning and I would say I'll do it and she would come over to my house and we would stand on the front stoop and wait for the cab to come and it only cost us a quarter for both of us to go to work. But, if the cab driver saw us walking across the grass he would charge us a quarter a piece. That was the Falls Church Cab Company owned by the Murphy Brothers who had a little teeny wood framed building on South Washington Street in the city of Falls Church which then was the town of Falls Church and that is where they ran the cab company from. They had a dirt parking lot in the back and now the Falls Church Cab Company is one huge conglomeration because they took over the Chrysler-Plymouth building, the automobile dealership building at the corner of Hillwood and Lee Highway.

Now if you call a cab it cost you a fortune plus 10 cents a bag if you are coming from the grocery store.

Linda: I didn't realize they charged per bag.

Jane: Oh yea, 10 cents per bag and that was six or seven years ago, because my neighbor got so indignant because she had to pay to have her groceries put in and out of his trunk.

Linda: Tell me about your children growing up. Did you work while they were young?

Jane: No, no one in my neighborhood did at least 90 percent of the women in my neighborhood were stay at home moms. If the women worked, most of them had older children. Everybody on my block, and there were like 12 houses, the only one I don't know the background on were the original owners who were World War II Veterans. So we all had young kids who are now in their 60's, some of them. We had one retired Army Colonel who had older children, but he also had a younger daughter who is probably 60 now. We had a neighborhood that was pretty much the same age group. A lot of us came out from Washington because there was no housing in the city of Washington at the time that veterans could afford.

Linda: What did houses cost back then in the 40's?

Jane: We bought a little Cape Cod; it cost \$10,500 on a quarter acre lot. Our closing costs were \$303. The house came with a stove but no refrigerator. Our refrigerator cost us, and we had to go to Washington, D.C. to buy a refrigerator because there was nowhere to buy one out here. It cost \$300. Everything that we did in that house for the first two years in that house seemed to cost us \$300 and it got to be a standing joke. But it was a lovely neighborhood and like I said almost everyone was a stay at home mom and you weren't afraid to let your kids go wherever they wanted to go.

The Junior Women's Club in Jefferson Village, in the summer time would put on movies in the middle of the week - Ma and Pa Kettle and Frances the

Talking Mule. There would be matinees at the Jefferson Theater and you bought a book of tickets and I think there were six movies, and I think it cost a dollar and 10 or a dollar and 20 cents for the six movies. The kids walked to the movies and you never worried where your kids were. In the summer time my two kids, the older ones Jimmy and Kathy, would leave home after breakfast and I would not see them until lunch time but I knew they were all right I knew they were safe. At times they would be playing down the creek or they would be at somebody's house with a monopoly game. The boys which there were three fellows, all played monopoly. They had three monopoly boards set up at each house and they would take turns going to each house playing monopoly. If you wanted your kid you hollered out the front door or back door and the next mom would pick the call up and it went up and down the neighborhood and all of a sudden you had a kid. It was great. The girls would play under the Dog Wood Tree in my yard with their dolls and then Barbie came into being and of course that was quite a rage.

Our neighborhood didn't start turning over people wise for quite a while so all these kids in the neighborhood, by the time they started elementary school, first grade, there were millions of kids in the neighborhood.

Linda: What elementary school did they go to?

Jane: The older kids, there was no Graham Road School, no Timber Lane, no Devonshire, nor Pine Springs nothing, because all of that had not been developed. Our kids, the older ones that are in their late 50's and 60's went to Oak Street School in the town of Falls Church across Lee Highway so we had to shuttle our kids back and forth; there was no bus service.

Linda: And how far away would that have been?

Jane: A good two miles. Now, it is the only school that the city of Falls Church owns that is within their own jurisdiction. The other three schools are in Fairfax County. Oak Street School is now Thomas Jefferson Elementary School and it has been expanded, like you could not possibly imagine years ago. When the City broke off from the county Greenway Downs and Jefferson Village wanted to be annexed along with the City the

town of Falls Church, to become part of the City of Falls Church and Falls Church says we don't want you. They said you have no sidewalks, no gutters or curbs and we would have to put that all in never mind that we supply your water and sewer. We don't want you because of too much expense and you have too many kids. We wanted to be annexed because of their excellent schools.

Linda: And so today your water still comes from the city?

Jane: Yes it does. We are still in the water system in the city and its good service. Their billing department is absolutely atrocious. It is horrible, instead of getting a bill every three months, and they also take care of the county's part of the sewer bill for the sewer based on how much water you have coming in and going out, instead of getting a bill every three months you might get a bill every six months or four months and for a while it was nine months. It is terrible. They did not maintain water pressure. We had one hellacious fire on George Mason Road, which was a part of the George Mason's Estate; he had a farm there on George Mason. There was an old barn there that was converted into housing and it was a bunch of hippies in there that were running the place and on New Year's Day one of the candles caught fire in the house and that was a horrible, horrible fire that burnt the barn to the ground. Nobody got hurt, but, there was a bad situation with the water pressure for the fire department to fight the fire and that was a little over thirty years ago. Now there are two or three houses on the property. But you could see the smoke and you could smell it and I lived about six blocks away, and this was in Greenwood Downs Subdivision so of course everybody of course goes to see what the fire is and that was on New Year's Day.

Linda: So that would have been in the 1970's.

Jane: Yes a long time ago.

Linda: After elementary school, where did you kids go to school?

Jane: By that time in elementary school - my oldest boy is 58, he went to Graham Road School, and by that time it had been built. There was a need

for it because Jefferson Village was full of people. Greenway Downs was the dividing line and they also built Devonshire at the same time each on one end of Graham Road, one at Lee Highway and one at Arlington Blvd.

Our kids went to Graham Road Elementary School because they could walk in. We were within the boundary for walk in. But, when they went to high school the oldest boy Jim went to Falls Church High School which was in the city of Falls Church, but owned by the county including the ground and the ball fields, and that's all been sold to the city and so forth. That is all townhouses and single-family homes now in the city off of Hillwood Avenue. My daughter went to Whittier Intermediate, which eventually was turned into in 1968, Falls Church High School it expanded and turned into Falls Church High School. This was a wonderful thing for the kids in an intermediate school because all of these big shot seniors came over from Falls Church High School and couldn't find their way around and all these little freshmen at Falls Church High School had to show these big shot seniors where to go to class. It was a riot, because the freshman had a ball with that because they never got to transfer schools. They went to Whittier and stayed while it was being renovated and enlarged into Falls Church High. So this was a big advantage for the freshmen, they had a blast with this.

Speaking of Fall Church High School, there use to be a music director named Jim Lundsford who eventually became the music director for the county but he was the music director at Fall Church High School, both the old one and the new one. He would take his kids, the marching band and march them from the school to his house on Chestnut Avenue and make them play to get use to playing music while they were marching in parades. His band marched in the Nixon Inaugural Parade. I can't remember what year it was, but way back when Nixon was inaugurated President, they marched in that band. And his band marched in, not that my kids were involved before or after, but they marched in the Macy Day's Parade. Jim Lundsford was definitely recognized as a music director. The kids had a ball, the Falls Church Marching Band, every summer went to music camp down at Orkney Springs, Virginia and that was for two weeks I think, they played music down there and gave concerts for the surrounding counties. It was a great way.

Let see, the only other major fire I can think of was when Hechinger's in the City of Falls Church burnt down - that was at Lee Highway and Maple Street Then they had one fire up at the Jefferson Village Apartments which is now Kingsley Common's Townhouse Apartments and there was a little lady there from Viet Nam who was a seamstress and she kept begging the firemen, please save my sewing machine, please save my sewing machine, that was how she made her living, was sewing she was a beautiful seamstress but she was so afraid they would not get her sewing machine out of that house.

There were two grocery stores, one at Jefferson Village Shopping Center and one at the Graham Road Shopping Center. At Jefferson Village there was the Jefferson Theater and the JV Grille, which is still there and a barber shop. Where Merchants Tire Company is now, was a grocery store and I can't remember whether it was a Grand Union or Food Fair one or the other.

Then if you went to the other end of Graham Road there was a Graham Road Shopping Center what is now a finger nail finishing place, was a wonderful hardware store run by a Swedish couple and downstairs at Christmas time they had toy layaways. You must remember that none of us had a lot of money and they would have layaways for toys at Christmas time. Then next-door was a grille, and there is a grille there, but that was sort of a neighborhood place you could take your kids in for dinner. By any means it was just a little restaurant that is all. At the other end, which is now the Harvest Moon Chinese Restaurant, was a grocery store and it was, I think, a Grand Union and when the Grand Union went out of business it turned into a slot car racing and that went bankrupt because slot cars by the time this young fellow put all of his inheritance into this, they went out of fashion.

Linda: Wow, what was a slot car?

Jane: It is, do you know what a train track looks like? (Linda, yes) The track is closed and in the middle was a slot and you put your cars up on that slot and then you use a remote control to race them around the track, just like

an automobile track. There were slot car tracks and at one point they were very, very popular and then like most fads it went out of style.

But out here in Merrifield, this was all blank - very little out here. As far as Tyson's Corner is concerned that was woods. On Chain Bridge Road, I am assuming because I don't go out there anymore because it is too congested there are two red pillars at Chain Bridge Road leading into West Park off of Chain Bridge, that was the entrance to a really large dairy farm, that took all that side of Chain Bridge Road that was a big dairy farm.

Linda: Would this have been in the 1950's?

Jane: Yea I think it was it had to be because we moved out here in the late 1940's. There was the Tyson's meat locker (Linda was that on Rt. 7) on Rt. 7. It was in a dirt parking lot and the farmers you must remember that this was all farm land; the farmers would take their cows in for slaughter. Come hunting season those butchers would clean all their machines down and do nothing but deer and bear meat for the hunters that would bring their stuff in.

Linda: So they would hunt bear here?

Jane: Yes, you could hunt just about anything out here back then. After deer season was over they would clean their machines back down, which they had to do according to health regulations and go back to butchering cattle. The meat locker was there; the rest was farmland, big dairy farms. The intersection of Gallows Road and Arlington Blvd, which was not Arlington Boulevard, at that point it was Lee Boulevard, Lee Highway Lee Boulevard, was just a plain old intersection and then of course Merrifield and Yorktown and all that started to develop.

Linda: Do you remember the airport that was on Rt. 50?

Jane: There were two airports in Fairfax County. One was at Bailey's Crossroads and the other was at Arlington Blvd. and Graham Road, which is now Loehman's Plaza and they had big Oak Trees lining one side and you had little private planes that flew in and out all the time. As far as I can

remember there was only one fatal crash up there and that was a long, long time ago, at least 50 years ago. That fellow worked for Western Electric, which was part of the Ma Bell System at that point. And when we moved in our subdivision, oh and at Bailey's Crossroads the airplanes would take off and at the end of their runway was this great big huge drop off so the fellows would try to get their planes up before they hit that because if they didn't they would have gone down on their belly. When they built Skyline Towers on that airport they poured the concrete in one of the high rises and it fell down.

Linda: I remember that, that was in the 1960's.

Jane: It fell down and of course everybody had to go look and it caused a massive traffic jam for that time then they got it all straightened out and we now have Skyline Towers. I can remember out here in Merrifield, and this is the last ten or fifteen years, Merrifield has sprouted and become very congested. There are now high rises (**Linda:** we are talking today about the year of 2007) where it use to be all industry. WNVT which is a television station because they have a big tower that goes over onto Virginia Department of Transportation property and everybody who moved out here, now remember the tower was there first everybody who has moved in complained about the tower, the radio tower interfering with their reception on their televisions and the receptions on their radios. It turned out that it was not WNVT that was doing that, it was the equipment company down the street.

Linda: Let's go back to your husband. What was his work and where did you meet?

Jane: He went to work for Griffith Consumers which was an oil burner company in Washington, D.C., mainly because his father worked there. Loyalty sometimes is not very good, but anyway he went to work for them; and two of the kids I grew up with, one of the fellows worked there.

My husband's girlfriend at that time would not go out with him that night because they were going to a (horrors) night club and she did not like night clubs so they asked me if I would go and I said no. So it boiled down to the

fact that they said if you don't go, we can't go so I said okay I will go. That is how I met my husband, on a blind date. That was in 1946 somewhere way back there, and we seemed to hit it off and we got married and then moved out here.

Linda: What do you remember about World War II and rationing or anything?

Jane: Out here? (**Linda**, out here) nothing. I am going to quote my father and I want people to remember that he did not cuss around women. He came to visit us one Sunday, he walked to the front door and he did not say hello Jane or hello Jim, he looked at the two of us and said "what in the hell did you move so far out in the country for" and he came from D.C.

Linda: What part of D.C. was it that you grew up?

Jane: I started out in N.E. Washington, in what they called Woodridge near the Maryland, Mt. Rainier line. Then we moved up to N.W. Washington, to D.C., Chevy Chase and that is where I grew up most of the time. And my girlfriend and I decided we were big shots and we were going to get our own apartment and we did. Then I got married and moved out here.

Linda: So tell me more about your work. You worked for the telephone company.

Jane: I worked for, during the Second World War up until that point Washington was a very sleepy, very comfortable southern town. There were lots of tree-lined streets, lovely homes; most of the people were government workers that worked for the government in some capacity. We went to neighborhood elementary schools and junior high's and senior highs and a lot of people at that point were not so-called outsiders as they are now. I sound very prejudiced and in a way I am. My junior high school principal was a childhood friend of my father's. My cousin and her little friends from school, now she is 91, would go down to the rail road tracks and pick up coal that fell from the coal cars to put in their coal burning fire places. Among one of them was eventually a Washington D.C., Chief of Police. We would ice skate on the reflecting pool between the memorial

and the monument and in the winter time, when I was living in North West we would go down to Rock Creek Park, Military Road and ice skate on the creek, Rock Creek. We would swim out at Chevy Chase Pavilion which in my father's day was a huge out door dance hall where they went to dance with their ladies and that was back in the early 1900's.

Growing up in Washington was great, they had streetcars, they had buses and I can remember when they had overhead wires for the streetcars to under ground wiring. In Georgetown there was a transition point and the car would jerk when it went from once power source to another. There was Glen Echo in the summertime, and please remember that this was a very segregated city, very segregated.

Linda: Can you talk about the segregation in relationship to after you moved to Fairfax County?

Jane: Fairfax County was very segregated, as a matter of fact the whole State of Virginia was. What I am going to say is strictly hearsay because I never heard it myself it was passed on to me, when the James Lee School and Luther Jackson Intermediate were getting ready to be integrated, those principals did not want their schools to be integrated. They did not want those white kids; those white kids were going to drag their schools down, so there's your reverse discrimination. James Lee was a black community on Annandale Road. They had some excellent black doctors, whose office building is still there. The Costner family, the Henderson's and I can't remember the third family but they were the bigger families in that area. Galloway Methodist Church was all black and they had the most wonderful choir and their women belonged to the women's society for all of the denominations of churches within this area. We had our annual meeting there one year and that's how come I knew they had a beautiful choir. There is a cemetery behind that and there is Tinner's Hill, which is all black and that is the first NAACP chapter, which was formed there and there is a memorial in Falls Church on Lee Highway for that. There was no mixing of the races. I can remember when my daughter was in high school and I picked up a bunch of kids after band practice and one young fellow was from India or Pakistan somewhere in that area of the world. He lived off of a side street back of James Lee and I took him home

like I did all the rest of the kids and I was going to take him down his street and he said no, don't do that. He said that I would be punished if you show up, you are a white woman - so there again reverse discrimination.

There was very little interaction between the two groups. There was a young girl from the James Lee section, I can't remember her name I wish I could, but she had formed a friendship with a girl from my neighborhood and then she was, I believe kidnapped and she eventually was murdered and they found her body up what is now Luther Jackson School up that way. So as far as the two neighborhoods were concerned, they were just two neighborhoods they didn't intermingle to any extent but you may have known some people there. Some of them held civil service jobs, Wallace Costner was my mailman for years and he lives up in Vienna, I think - now. But, it was a very different lifestyle.

Linda: You have brought with you today some newspaper articles, particularly this one if you could tell me a little about it.

Jane: Okay. This is the drive-in theater at Merrifield and the other one is a picture of the Jefferson Theater and the article includes mention of all the other little theaters around that are no more. The Jefferson Theater was at the end of my neighborhood; it is now a Baskin-Robbins and a barbershop. The back part, which was actually where the seats are, became a Chili's Restaurant and then it closed and then within the last three years it burnt up and they are trying to renovate it but I don't know what they are going to do with it. It was a big deal to have theaters in your own neighborhood and there were a lot of them in this area. Then there was the drive-in which was absolutely the best thing that ever happen to young families because we had a station wagon, three kids and one very little one and for an adult to go to the movies and hire a baby sitter it got expensive. When you could load everybody in the station wagon, fix a big thing of pop corn at home, and remember there were no microwaves then so you popped it on the stove and put drinks in the car you would go to the movies because you paid by the carload. You would go and if the kids got tired they would flake out in back of the stationwagon and go to sleep.

This one picture shows an ambulance at the entrance because that was a horror movie and the ambulance was there as a part of their advertising gimmick. So, if you got too frightened and had a heart attack the ambulance was right there to cart you off to the hospital that didn't exist.

Linda: I see, and this picture was taken at the Lee Highway Arlington Blvd Theater (**Jane:** in 1955), yes and the Jefferson Theater was (**Jane:** in 1949). That is wonderful.

Jane: It was fun, you let your kids go to the movies, and you didn't have to worry about them walking home. We had a good time.

Linda: One last topic. I understand you are still working today. (**Jane:** Yes) Would you tell me about that?

Jane: I work part time for Fairfax County Board of Elections. I work four hours three times a week. I enjoy it; we have an excellent Registrar now who is in charge of the office. She's a smart young woman and everyone in the office gets along with everybody else and it is a pleasant place to work.

Linda: What do you do there?

Jane: I am not quite sure how you would explain it. Registrations come in from all over the county and all over the state. Other jurisdictions outside of Fairfax send all of their voter registration applications for the most part to Richmond. Richmond parcels them out to the jurisdictions to which they belong and sends them to us. When they come to us, the box comes up from Richmond, we go through and I sit at the desk and review each one of the applications to make sure everything is filled out. Then I put each application in the proper box for the ladies in the office to enter into the system. Voter registration system has changed statewide and it seems I am not a techie; I can't do what they do so they have given me this other job which I definitely appreciate. It gets me out of the house and like I said it's a wonderful bunch of people. I have worked under quite a few Registrars, that is the person in charge of all of it, and this one is the best one we have ever had.

Linda: Who is our Registrar?

Jane: Jacqueline Harris. She is a crackerjack, she is smart, she is young, she's a go getter and believe me I have worked under a lot of them, way back to when they can't even figure how long ago. The closest we have come is that I have either worked for the electoral board or the general registrar for approximately 50 years. It goes back so far that if you were an election officer you could not be a Registrar, and then the laws changed and you could be both. I was an election officer for quite a while and then went into the office for something one day, when it was up on University Drive and one of the ladies looked at me and she said "why aren't you registering"? And I said oh, come on you know I can't. She said, 'yes you can, class tomorrow night'. And I started registering voters and been at it ever since. I have registered all over this county, the only place I haven't done is down towards the Mount Vernon area. I have registered out as far as the Reston Regional Library all through Providence and part of Annandale, part of Mason, all of Providence and it's an interesting job and I would like to stay a while.

Linda: One final question. What is your favorite recollection since you have lived here in Providence?

Jane: My favorite recollection? Oh! Linda, there are so many there is no favorite.

Linda: Well give me a couple of things.

Jane: I think one of them was working as book club chairman for Graham Road School, registering voters all over the county; you meet so many different people. My favorite, I think is my own group at home. We formed, one of the neighbors there were only four of us on the block more than that really and she looked at us and said there are four of us that are here and we are going to have a coffee club and everybody said "oh Ellen" and she said nope, Tuesday morning my house ten o'clock. We started out with coffee and doughnuts at her house and I guess that this was some 50 years ago. Our group grew to 30 women, have come and gone, some have

passed away and we are down now to seven of us but we are still going strong.

Linda: That's great. Do you have any advice for future generations coming to live here in Providence District?

Jane: Not really, just enjoy life. It's a great place to live, not just Providence, but all of Fairfax. I really wouldn't want to move once you are here; young people nowadays don't stay they buy a little house that's a starter home and I think they miss an awful lot not staying, not binding. They need to sink roots because I am afraid they are going to need them, they really do need to sink roots in one spot and stay.

Linda: Thank you Jane this has been very enjoyable for me and it has been nice to meet with and talk with you.

Track two continued:

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Jane: At Jefferson Village Park on the Fourth of July they had a carnival come in and everybody would go down to the carnival for all the games and rides. Then it turned into a baseball field and my oldest son was one of the groups that formed the first Little League teams and all the coaches and everyone else was in the neighborhood then as the kids got older it turned into a Babe Ruth League. Jefferson Village Park was never part of the county to start with; it was given to a separate entity set up just for the park. Harold Parks, who is deceased, was one of the Directors and when he left the area it was turned over to Key Kobayashi. And the bridge at the Jefferson Village Park was named for Key because of all the work he did with it. There was a real live, honest to God, cowboy rodeo at what used to be called Arnold Estates off of Annandale Road and we went to it. They had bronco busting and everything you would see in a rodeo. In Annandale at the intersection of Annandale and Backlick Roads they had a Fairfax County Fair, there is now a bank building there and that was a big county fair.

They had horses, cows, sheep, pigs, chickens, quilting and everything was there at that fair. The parking lot was across the street and we would walk to it from my in-laws house, which was three or four blocks off of Backlick and that, is about it, I guess.